



POLICING *an aging* POPULATION

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As a nation, our collective population is beginning to show its age. The Baby Boomer generation — born between 1946 and 1964 to post World War II parents longing to settle down, raise a family and live a simple, successful life — began to reach the standard retirement age of 65 in 2011. And now, a generation that has been so instrumental in the dynamic advancements of our culture during the past several decades, is embarking on a new frontier as they transition from baby boomers to senior citizens.

Nationally, the older population is expected to double from 36 million in 2003 to 72 million by 2030, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. That trend already is evident in Kentucky's population as well. From 1980 to 2010 Kentucky's overall population increased by 18 percent, yet the population of individuals age 65 and older increased by 40 percent.

As the faces of Kentucky's communities change, law enforcement agencies across the commonwealth are faced with new issues and challenges in policing the communities they serve.

"You hire [officers] to work the community you live in," Benton Police Department Chief Tracy Watwood said. "Obviously, we know we have a lot of senior citizens here, so we need [officers] who can stay calm and deal with senior citizens at times."

Benton is located in the heart of Marshall County, which has the third highest percentage population of people age 65 years and older in the state, according to a 2010 census summary. Because of the Land Between the Lakes area, many counties in the western part of the state have become a kind of retirement mecca, boasting higher than average elderly populations. Law enforcement agencies in these areas have learned to specialize in meeting the needs of the seniors that are such a large portion of their communities.

TAKING THE TIME

For an assortment of reasons, oftentimes, senior citizens live alone. Either they've moved into a community for retirement, leaving behind other family members, or their spouses have passed away, leaving